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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF JESUS FOR MODERN RELIGION IN VIEW OF HIS ESCHATOLOGICAL TEACHING

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It is hardly too much to say that the study of the Gospels has been revolutionized in recent years by the new emphasis laid on the apocalyptic factor. At the close of last century, New Testament scholars, in spite of their numberless differences on points of detail, were agreed on the general interpretation of the life and work of Jesus. He was the prophet of a new righteousness, based on a new conception of the nature of God and of man's relation to God. In the proclamation of his message he availed himself of the current expectation of a kingdom of God, which would be ushered in by the promised Messiah; but while acquiescing in the traditional ideas he had recognized their insufficiency, and had tacitly revised them and filled them with a new content. The Kingdom, as he conceived it, was not a visible transformation, effected by a sudden crisis, but a spiritual fulfilment. For the world at large it would come about by the gradual diffusion of a truer knowledge of God, and the molding to his will of all human interests and institutions. For the individual it would be realized in a life of inward communion with God and perfect obedience to him. In like manner, while Jesus claimed to be the Messiah, he impressed a meaning of his own on the traditional title. He was the Messiah in the sense that he delivered men from spiritual bondage by opening up to them the true way of life. The sovereignty to which he felt himself called by God was ethical in its nature and rested wholly on moral sanctions. It was the tragedy of his career that this higher conception of messiahship, which he himself cherished, was in conflict with the popular hope. The apocalyptic language in which he was obliged to express himself was understood literally, and even his disciples could not shake off their dreams of a triumphant deliverer, coming in the clouds of heaven to establish the

Kingdom of God. By the silent influence of his companionship—occasionally by direct teaching—he tried to win them over to his own conception of the character and work of the Messiah; but they remained without understanding to the end. Such, in brief outline, was the reading of the gospel history in which nearly all scholars concurred until a few years ago. The apocalyptic element in the thought of Jesus was recognized, but it was held to be merely formal and peripheral. It belonged to the contemporary language which he found to his hand and which he employed with reluctance and misgiving. His teaching throughout was at cross-purposes with the vehicle in which he was compelled to deliver it. The conclusion was therefore drawn that in interpreting Jesus for our own day we need not trouble ourselves about his eschatology. His real intention was only warped and obscured by those inadequate categories imposed on him by the thought of his time.

A closer study of the Gospels, in the light of that great mass of Jewish apocalyptic literature which is now accessible, has entirely changed these generally accepted views of the life and teaching of Jesus. The element which it seemed necessary to neglect or explain away is coming to be regarded as nothing less than central. Jesus did not employ the contemporary hopes as imagery, or understand them in some new esoteric sense, but embraced them with a full conviction. He looked for a literal kingdom, which was presently to manifest itself in the manner anticipated by the popular hope. He thought of himself as destined to exercise the messianic office, and to this office he attached its traditional import. His purely religious message was only the other side of his eschatology, and was everywhere determined by it. Only a few years have passed since this new interpretation of the life of Jesus challenged a serious attention, and scholars have been occupied thus far in testing its validity, and adjusting it in detail to the given facts. This preliminary work has not yet by any means been completed; but at least the outline of a new picture of Jesus has begun to emerge from the investigation. To what extent is it likely to modify our whole conception of Christianity? It is vain to imagine that any question affecting the life of Jesus can ever be regarded as of merely historical interest. Our estimate of what he did and thought, and

of the meaning he attributed to his message cannot but reflect itself in our religious attitude today.

In one sense the new reading of the gospel history may be said to mark a reaction. The church was founded on the belief that Jesus was the Messiah of prophecy, who would return in glory to bring in the Kingdom; and in spite of all attempts to spiritualize this conception it has never ceased to hold its own in popular Christianity. There are millions in our churches today who have never thought of doubting that the apocalyptic statements in the Gospels are to be taken literally. They anticipate a great crisis in which the present world will come to an end, and a second advent of Christ, in his character of Judge and King. It is not a little curious that the apocalyptic view of the Gospels has found its most active opponents among professedly conservative scholars. They seem to forget that the position they defend is the recent conquest of a rationalizing theology, and has never been really accepted by the general mind of the church.

But between the modern view and that of popular Christianity there are two all-important differences: (1) The eschatology of Jesus, as understood by the church, has been tempered with later theological elements. It is assumed that when Jesus spoke of the Messiah and the approaching Kingdom he meant to suggest far more than he actually said. His utterances have to be so construed as to allow room for the ideas of Paul and the Fourth Evangelist, and the teaching of the creeds. The modern interpretation, however, forbids this reading of subsequent doctrine into the thought of Jesus. He shared in the apocalyptic outlook of his own time; and we must not shrink from taking his conceptions in all their apparent crudeness and realism. (2) The eschatology of Jesus was formerly accepted as part of his revelation. It was believed that in virtue of his divine endowment he knew the mysteries of the future, and in some partial measure disclosed them. To the modern view, however, these apocalyptic sayings, which might seem to demonstrate his higher knowledge, are evidence of his limitation. The ideas expressed in them were not drawn from any supernatural source but from a tradition which had formed itself in the course of Jewish history. Jesus lived and thought in that

world of apocalyptic belief. What we now perceive to have been mere imaginations, possible only in an unscientific age, appealed to his mind as realities, and gave direction to his message.

According to the new interpretation, then, Jesus took up that apocalyptic hope which had long been cherished in Israel and which had lately received a fresh impulse from the preaching of John the Baptist. Like John he believed that the Kingdom of God—the new age in which God would assert his sovereignty—was presently to set in. The old order of things would disappear and give place to another, which would be subject to entirely different laws. Possessed with this conviction he made it his task to prepare men for the Kingdom and to gather around him the nucleus of a new community that should inherit it. At the outset he appears to have come forward merely as the prophet of the Kingdom; but in the process of his mission there grew up in him a new consciousness of his vocation. He learned to realize that the coming of the Kingdom was bound up with his own personality—that he was himself the destined Messiah who would inaugurate it. More than ever, as his death at the hands of his enemies became certain, his conception of himself as the Messiah took definite shape in his mind. He looked to a day in the future when he would be clothed with the attributes of the Son of Man who was to descend from heaven to judge the world. By the death which threatened to crush him utterly he would be exalted to a higher state of being, and would assume his throne as Messiah.

Such, in a few words, are the conclusions to which we are led by the new reading of the life of Jesus. Those who accept it are in substantial agreement on the main points; but in matters of detail there is still, and perhaps will always be, a wide diversity of opinion. Three questions in particular are much debated, and it is important to note them in view of our present inquiry: (1) Did Jesus conceive of the Kingdom as coming by a gradual process or by a sudden catastrophe? For the most part, undoubtedly, he indorses the current apocalyptic idea of a great crisis, followed at once by the breaking-in of the Kingdom; but occasionally, as in the parable of the Leaven and the various parables of the springing seed, he appears to contemplate a development. He may have

hesitated between these two views, but in any case the main character of his teaching remains the same. The Kingdom is that of the apocalyptic hope, whether its coming is envisaged as a sudden glory or as an unfolding dawn. (2) Did he regard the Kingdom as wholly in the future, or as already in some manner present? Here again he speaks, for the most part, of a future kingdom; yet the future and the present are blended together in his mind. The Kingdom is still to come, but it is so near at hand that it can already be discerned and apprehended. Its powers and influences have projected themselves into the present age: men can order their lives even now as children of the Kingdom. (3) Did he think of himself as already Messiah, or only as destined to messiahship after he had finished his work by death? His references to the coming of the Son of Man seem clearly to indicate that he distinguished between what he was now and what he would be hereafter. He read his claim to the messiahship in terms of the apocalyptic hope, which looked for an angelic being, sent down from heaven. Nevertheless, he is conscious of a supreme authority bestowed on him in the present. In a latent and potential sense, if not actually, he is already the promised Messiah.

From the ambiguous nature of these and many other questions with which we are confronted in the gospel history, we at least learn the danger of enforcing a too consistent eschatology. It may be granted that Jesus acquiesced in the traditional hope and made it the basis of his message; but he adopted it as a whole, without binding himself down to every detail. To class him with the purely apocalyptic thinkers is to misunderstand him altogether. Moreover, we have to allow for elements in his thought which had nothing to do with his eschatology and continually clashed with it. Even a professed apocalypticist like the author of IV Esdras will ever and again break away from his rigid scheme when he is overpowered by high feeling or moral conviction; and we cannot expect to find in eschatology the exclusive key to the thinking of Jesus. His interests were too large and many sided to adjust themselves at every point to certain prescribed beliefs. Whatever may have been his relation to the apocalypticists, he was much more nearly akin to the prophets. No sober investigator who weighs the whole evidence

of the Gospels will fail to allow for the freedom and independence of Jesus. He accepted the Jewish eschatology as he did the Law; but in his treatment of both of them he relied on his own insight and not on mere tradition.

The teaching of Jesus cannot be resolved into mere eschatology; but we have still to admit that at least its framework is eschatological. An attempt has been made to escape from this conclusion by the road of literary criticism. The apocalyptic element, it is argued, was imported into our Gospels after the hope of the parousia had become dominant in the church. Jesus' own teaching was revised in the interest of this later eschatology, and a wrong impression was thus given of its nature. Some color is lent to this theory by the presence in the Gospels of certain passages—such as the "little apocalypse" of Mark—which bear evident traces of later elaboration; but as a whole it has failed to justify itself. The apocalyptic strain in Jesus' teaching is not confined to isolated passages which a little ingenuity can explain away. It is all-pervasive; and the Sermon on the Mount and the parables bear witness to it as well as do the definitely apocalyptic chapters. For that part, the prevalence of the hope in the early church is itself proof that it was recognized from the beginning as essential to the Christian message. This, then, is the new situation with which the religious thinking of our time has to reckon. For the last generation theology has taken for its watchword "Back to Christ"; and this reversion from the later doctrinal constructions to the simple teaching of Jesus has been welcomed as the first movement toward a more rational faith. Now we are discovering that the return to Christ is also beset with difficulties. The original teaching, on which we are asked to build as on a sure foundation, is involved in presuppositions which are far more alien to the modern mind than those of the old theology. It can hardly be wondered at that the new interpretation is viewed with suspicion, even by many who have felt themselves constrained on critical grounds to accept it.

The difficulty most commonly urged is not, when rightly considered, a very serious one. It is maintained that if we think of Jesus as sharing in the apocalyptic hope we must regard him as

mistaken in his outlook on the future. His death was followed by no supreme crisis; the Kingdom, so far from coming "within this generation," has not yet appeared after two thousand years. If his message thus rested on a misconception, we can ascribe to it no validity or meaning. Behind most of the attempts to construe the Kingdom as something inward and spiritual we can trace the desire to acquit Jesus of the imputation of error. Even when the apocalyptic character of many of the sayings is granted, some effort is usually made to refer them to a far-distant future. The suggestion is that we must hold to those predictions of Jesus until the end of time has proved whether they were right or wrong. One may question the ingenuousness of this procedure; but in any case it defends the literal accuracy of the forecasts by emptying them of all purpose. The mere coming of the Kingdom, long ages hence, was of no concern to Jesus. What he insisted on was the fact of its imminence. In the knowledge that it was even now at the door, men were to find the decisive motive for repentance and moral renewal. If we grant that his outlook was apocalyptic, we have no choice but to admit that he was mistaken; and there is no reason that our faith in him should in any way be impaired by this admission. The time has gone by when it was deemed necessary to claim for him an infallible judgment in all matters of human knowledge. Even a conservative theology is willing to concede that his ideas on history, science, criticism, were subject to the limitations of his age. And this may safely be granted, too, with regard to his anticipations of the future. He framed them in accordance with that apocalyptic scheme which lay to his hand; and the event proved that they were delusive. But they cannot affect our attitude to him unless they belong to the substance of his religious message.

Here, however, we are thrown back on a much graver difficulty. The eschatological ideas of Jesus were not external to his message, like his judgments on history and criticism, but were closely related to it. His conceptions of the divine purpose, of man's duty and destiny, of his own nature and mission, were all expressed in terms of the apocalyptic hope. Does it not follow that his work was so conditioned by obsolete modes of thinking that we must cease to

claim for it any permanent significance? The criticism of a former age might occasionally suggest that Jesus was mistaken in his forecast of the Kingdom, or in his own title to be the Messiah. But we now have to reckon with doubts of a more radical nature. The conceptions of Kingdom and Messiah, as viewed in the light of modern investigation, were wholly imaginary. Their origin can be traced in the accidents of Jewish history, in primitive mythology and speculation. Since the message of Jesus was entangled with these conceptions, which were the product of mere fantasy, must we not conclude that it was itself unreal? It rested on presuppositions which had no validity except for the age he lived in. Schweitzer expresses what seems to be the inevitable inference from the new reading of the Gospels when he declares, at the end of his well-known book: "Jesus belonged to his own time, and cannot be transported into ours." Bound up as it is with the ancient apocalyptic, the teaching of Jesus has no significance for modern men.

Now before attempting an answer to this difficulty, there is one caution which we shall do well to bear in mind. Undoubtedly we owe much to the historical method, as applied to the study of religion; and it has nowhere yielded more fruitful results than in the tracing of that long development which issued in the Christian eschatology. But there is a natural fallacy which the one-sided application of the historical method has done much to encourage. We are apt to take for granted that when we have ascertained the genesis of a religious idea, and have related it to the conditions of a given time, we have finally disposed of it. As a mere historical phenomenon it can have no further relevance to our living thought and belief. But the truer attitude of mind is surely that which allows for something permanent amid the changing phases of development. The form in which the idea embodied itself from time to time was determined by historical accident; but the idea itself was independent of the form. Its truth and value cannot be assayed by any analysis of the process whereby it struggled toward an ever fuller expression. It is from this point of view that we need to arrive at our judgment of apocalyptic. That hope of the Kingdom on which it centered was indeed shaped by contemporary conditions, and was rooted in myth and fantasy.

But it does not follow that it was mere illusion, and that the message connected with it had meaning only for a particular age. We can see, rather, that the hope was fundamentally the same as that which has ever sustained the higher life of humanity. The form was peculiar to the time, and we can now perceive its inadequacies; but it gave expression—and in many ways magnificent expression—to a lasting reality.

Nevertheless, if Jesus moved wholly within the limits of Jewish apocalyptic thinking, we should have to confess that his work has now almost lost its value. The anticipation of a coming reign of God was indeed a noble one, and it cannot be said even of IV Esdras and the Psalms of Solomon that they have nothing to offer to our religious life today. Yet we cannot but feel that in these and the other apocalyptic writings the vital idea is entirely dependent on the perishable form. If Jesus looked merely for the traditional Kingdom, his work was for the age which found meaning in that conception, and can make no appeal to modern men. But was the thought of Jesus thus identified with the apocalyptic scheme? Is it not apparent, rather, that he employed the scheme only as a vehicle whereby he communicated a purely spiritual message?

One fact must here be clearly emphasized. It was commonly maintained by the older criticism that Jesus adopted the current eschatology by way of imagery—aware of its insufficiency, yet forcing it into the service of his own higher teaching. The modern interpretation cannot accept this view of the attitude of Jesus. It recognizes that he himself participated in the hopes and conceptions of his time. He believed that the world of nature and of human society would presently undergo a complete transformation, and all his teaching was determined by the thought of this coming change. But between the outlook of Jesus and that of the ordinary apocalyptic there was one all-important difference. Hitherto, while assuming that the Kingdom would be reserved for the righteous, men had been content to think of it externally. They cheered themselves, amid the miseries of the present, with glowing visions of the renovation of nature, the removal of disease and sorrow, the deliverance and exaltation of Israel. Jesus conceived of the Kingdom on its inward side. He no doubt assumed that it would bear

those material aspects on which the apocalyptic writers had delighted to dwell, but he allows them to fall out of sight. The Kingdom, as it presents itself to his mind, is the new age in which the will of God will be all in all—the better order in which men will enter into fellowship with God and offer him a service that grows spontaneously out of trust and love. To demonstrate that he so regarded the Kingdom, we do not need to resort to any artificial process of allegorizing and interpreting the statements of the Gospels. It is manifest everywhere that he was solely occupied with the moral and spiritual attributes of the coming age. The conventional apocalyptic picture has become for him merely the background and setting of his own conception of a reign of God, in which men will be brought into inward harmony with God's will.

Thus the permanent significance of Jesus' message is in no way impaired by its external dependence on the apocalyptic tradition. While he proclaimed the Kingdom it still remains true that what he taught was the new relation to God—the new obedience to him. It remains true, also, that what he gave to the world was a revelation, out of the depths of his own inward life. The scheme he had borrowed was nothing but the framework for those higher conceptions which had come to him immediately, in his personal communion with God. We may go yet farther and claim that the contemporary forms, so far from limiting him, were necessary to the fulness and purity of his revelation. They enabled him to escape from the horizons of his time and deliver a message that should have a lasting validity. This may be illustrated by the method adopted by various great thinkers who have endeavored to fix the absolute principles of the moral law. They have begun by imagining for themselves an ideal world—a Republic, or Utopia, or Kingdom of Ends—in which the disturbing influences that warp all human action under the makeshift conditions of the present have ceased to be operative. Only in this manner could they conceive of an absolutely binding law. The Utopia into which Jesus projected himself was that new age wherein the will of God would be done on earth as it is done in heaven. He had no need to imagine it, for it loomed before the mind of his time as an immi-

nent reality; yet, as we see it now, it was only a fantasy, born of a mood of thought which has altogether passed away. None the less it was the background against which he was able to body forth his ideal of an ultimate law of righteousness; and the ideal remains valid, although the vision of the Kingdom has long since dissolved.

It has been argued, however, by many who hold the apocalyptic view of the Gospels, that Jesus intended nothing more than to impose a relative and provisional rule of life. He looked for a kingdom in which all existing evils would be done away, and in which there would be no further need of patience, forgiveness, self-sacrifice. Since he was ever insisting on these and similar virtues we must conclude that his aim was a restricted one. The principles he laid down were to hold good only for the critical interval, while men were preparing themselves for the Kingdom, and would finally be superseded. But it would not be difficult to prove in detail that this theory of an "interim morality" which has found favor with not a few recent writers is based on a narrow, pedantic view of the nature of Jesus' teaching. It fails to recognize that the precepts he enunciated were not meant as definite rules but as examples of how the new spirit would manifest itself. The heirs of the Kingdom were to live as children of God. Amid the imperfect conditions of the present they were to exercise that higher will which would be required of them hereafter. Thus the morality of Jesus was nothing less than the righteousness of the Kingdom. He held up to men an absolute moral law, to which they were to conform their lives even now. For that part, the permanent validity of his teaching would not fall to the ground even if it could be proved that what he inculcated was an "interim morality." We should still have to conceive of him as looking toward an ultimate ideal, and molding the lives of men that they might attain to it. The "interim" for which his teaching is valid would be nothing else than the whole period of waiting and struggle that divides humanity from its goal.

The message of Jesus, therefore, loses none of its significance although we interpret it from the apocalyptic point of view. But what of his person? He claimed to be the Messiah, and in virtue of this claim the church has believed in him, and made him the

object of faith and worship. As we now perceive, however, the messianic category was itself a fanciful one, belonging to that apocalyptic world of thought which has grown meaningless. Must it not follow that we can no longer attach the old significance to the person of Christ? Those attributes which are ascribed to him in our prayers and hymns—the attributes of Judge, Intercessor, Savior, Lord of Glory—are all bound up with the messianic conception. If it is once discarded, must not the whole foundation of Christian piety crumble away?

It would be futile to argue that the acceptance of the modern view has made no difference. The doctrine of Christ, as formulated in the ancient creeds of the church, grew out of a given eschatology, and cannot be separated from it. Terms which were formerly accepted as literally descriptive of the nature and office of Christ have now a merely figurative value; and it is doubtful whether the church can long afford to insist upon them. As time goes on, and the ideas associated with them become ever less tenable, their only effect can be to obscure the real import of the life of Jesus. So far as the belief in his messiahship implies an eschatological scheme, in which he was called on to enact a definite part, we cannot allow that it had any correspondence with fact. But here again it is necessary to make a distinction between the form and the essential idea conveyed by it. We may acknowledge that the form was an inadequate, and even an illusory one, and still discern that it expressed for the mind of a particular age the true significance of Jesus. In the apocalyptic figure of the Messiah the Jewish people had gathered up their highest religious ideals. They conceived of the Kingdom as coming in through a deliverer, a representative of the divine justice and holiness, a revealer and dispenser of the eternal life. Jesus could define the vocation of which he was conscious by no other category than that of messiahship. For him, as for his contemporaries, it was involved with the data of eschatology, but these do not affect its ultimate meaning. It can be detached from them and embodied in other forms which correspond more truly with our own impression of the worth of Jesus. As a matter of fact, the faith of the church ceased to be satisfied, even within the first generation, with the original messianic

idea. Jesus became the Lord, the Savior, the Incarnate Word, the Son of God. The believers who had come in from the great gentile world did not hesitate to pierce the Jewish apocalyptic forms, and to describe, in their own language, what they had found in Jesus. There is no reason why our faith today should not exercise a similar liberty. The significance of Jesus is inherent in his own personality; and we apprehend it no less truly when the conception of messiahship is merged in some other, to which our modern thought can respond.

Jesus and his message do not lose their meaning for us when we read the Gospels in the light of the new interpretation. Indeed we may go still farther, and claim that by means of it the way has been opened for a truer and more vital understanding of the Christian message. Allusion has just been made to that restatement of the gospel which was begun in the early church and was carried out more and more fully in the course of the next three centuries. The apocalyptic categories which Jesus himself had used were gradually replaced by others, of a more abstract and philosophical nature, to which the gentile mind could respond more easily. From this later modification of Jesus' teaching, rather than from the teaching itself, the Christian theology has taken its departure. It represents the attempt to translate an eschatological message into terms borrowed from Greek speculation, and in this manner to express more fully its inner purport. Now it is a positive advantage that by the new reading of the Gospels we have been enabled to get behind the traditional church theology. The feeling has long been prevalent, within the church as well as outside of it, that the accepted creeds were inadequate and had ceased to make any real appeal. Yet they claimed to embody the faith as it had been once for all committed to the saints. Any endeavor to revise them, or even to look too narrowly into their historical development, was regarded as a veiled attack on the Christian revelation. But now we are in a position to distinguish between the original message and the theology that grew out of it. We can estimate the later doctrines at their true worth as interpretations, which are not necessarily binding on a new age, expressing its thought in different language. It is much that at this

critical time, when some readjustment of doctrine has become so urgent, we are finding our way back to the starting-point. Since we can reconstruct the message as Jesus himself delivered it, we are no longer dependent on the versions which have come down to us through the creeds. We can set to work, freely and intelligently, on that new presentation of Christianity which is required by the needs of our own time.

It may be objected that a new statement of the truth of Christianity has been rendered more difficult by the recovery of those forms which Jesus himself employed. Whatever may be lacking in the traditional doctrines, they are richer in themselves, and are more in keeping with our modern ways of thought than the fancies of apocalyptic. The idea of the Logos, grounded though it is in Greek speculation, affords a deeper basis for Christology than the original messianic conception. The belief in a cause of God, establishing itself gradually by the action of moral forces, is far truer and grander than the belief in a kingdom which will be introduced suddenly and miraculously. If we need a new interpretation of Christianity, is it not better to start from the later doctrines than from the eschatology set before us in the Gospels? Certainly the doctrines have still their meaning for us. It would be foolish to throw away as worthless all the results that have been patiently accumulated by nineteen centuries of Christian reflection. None the less the apocalyptic categories are in some ways better fitted than the theological to convey the essential message of Jesus. Their superiority consists in the very fact that we cannot construe them literally. In the theological doctrines the gospel is set forth in reasoned terms, and we are bound down to this one interpretation of it and no other. But apocalyptic makes its appeal to feeling and imagination. The reason is left unfettered, and can apprehend the underlying message, and formulate it anew. The vitality of our religion during all these ages has been due in no small measure to this, that Jesus never sought to express his meaning in abstract theological form. If he had spoken in the language of the creeds, his message would long ago have become obsolete, beyond hope of revival. But he availed himself of the plastic forms of the

current eschatology; and these have never ceased to retain their place alongside of the theological doctrines. Each new generation has felt itself free to associate its own deepest thoughts and longings with that hope of the Kingdom of God which had been given by Jesus. To one age it has meant an inward realization of the divine life, to another the union of all mankind in a spiritual commonwealth, to another the perfecting of the social order on a basis of justice and liberty. These ideals, and others like them, were all implicit in the conception of Jesus; and by clothing his message in the apocalyptic imagery he imparted it in all its richness and comprehensiveness. However we remold it, in accordance with our own needs and our own outlook on the world, we can still give effect to his purpose.

It has been maintained by Father Tyrrell in his last book, *Christianity at the Cross Roads*, that a positive place must be assigned to apocalyptic in the modern reconstruction of theology. He contends that in ordinary Protestantism the tendency has been to resolve religion into a mere rule of conduct or an intellectual scheme of doctrine. Apocalyptic, though belonging in all its details to a bygone tradition, assumes the existence of a supernatural order, with which our earthly life is meant to relate itself. It falls in with that mystical and sacramental conception of religion which has found its home within the Catholic church. One cannot but feel that Tyrrell entirely misapprehends the place of apocalyptic in the teaching of Jesus. It has no affinities with Catholic mysticism and sacramentalism. It serves, not to reduce the ethical demands to a subordinate or collateral position, but to enforce and exalt them. The coming of the Kingdom is nothing else than the ultimate fulfilment of righteousness. Yet in one sense there is truth in the argument that those apocalyptic forms in which it was originally delivered have still their place and function in Christianity. Our modern thought cannot accept them literally, and regards them as a shell that must be penetrated before we can apprehend the substance of the teaching of Jesus. But a religious message loses half its power unless it can speak to men in the language of the imagination. Ever since the days of the primitive

church the apocalyptic hopes have continued to hold their own, in spite of all efforts to supplant them by abstract doctrine. Christian piety has attached itself to them, much more than to the doctrines, even when it recognized most clearly that their value was only symbolical. And in this we may discern the working of a profound instinct. Men have never ceased to feel that there was something in the gospel of Christ which eluded all the formulae of theology, and could be expressed only in symbol. By means of the apocalyptic conceptions they have been able to realize, in some dim measure, this larger meaning of the Christian faith. The conceptions might resolve themselves, under the light of criticism, into little more than poetic fancies, but they had the wealth and suggestiveness of poetry. They reflected, as in a glass darkly, the higher spiritual realities. We can hardly doubt that in the future, as in the past, the message of Jesus will make its appeal to men through those consecrated forms in which he himself imparted it. They will only gain a larger significance when men have learned to understand them in their true character, as the imaginative vesture of the new revelation.